

The Builder.

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OPENING THE YEAR.

OUR readers are now so well acquainted with the scope, objects, and opinions of *THE BUILDER*, that it is scarcely necessary for us to repeat, on commencing our Sixth Volume, the remarks—under these heads which we have heretofore, on similar occasions, thought desirable to make. Architects, engineers, surveyors, builders, and all those numerous trades connected with building, owners of house property, the guardians of public edifices, friends of sanitary improvement, artists, antiquaries, and others, know quite well that in our pages is to be found matter of value and interest,—for most of these classes, indeed, information which they could not with propriety be without; but there is, nevertheless, a large number of persons—of the general public—to whom the title of our journal conveys no clear notion of its contents,—who regard it simply as a trade-paper, and would feel half ashamed to allow their friends to see it in the drawing-room. The number of these is growing less every day—*THE BUILDER*, as we remarked last week in closing the volume, is now to be found “on the table of the most illustrious gentleman in the kingdom, in all the Government offices, and in the studio of the clergyman as well as in the more humble dwelling of the operative.”—but to those who remain we would address a brief observation, with the view of removing this impression.

The verb “To build” has been much degraded amongst us, and has lost its full signification. “Our English word, *to build*,” says Horne Tooke, “is the Anglo-Saxon *Bylban*, to confirm, to establish, to make firm and sure and fast, to consolidate, to strengthen; and is applicable to all other things, as well as to dwelling places.”

In Germany the word retains its full meaning, and *THE BUILDER* there would be understood by all as taking legitimate cognizance of numerous and apparently diverse subjects, of which the title gives no hint to English minds. Letting this wide view pass,—to restore the significance of the word, if in one sense only, would be something: to lead to our buildings being really *BUILT*,—that is, “made firm, and sure, and fast,” would be something to interest all, as it would also be to *establish* such opinions in respect of attention to the production of beauty in our structures as might lead to it, and such knowledge of sanitary requirements in our dwellings and towns as would bring about arrangements by which thousands of lives, much

suffering, and more money, would be saved. This, all must admit, should concern all,—must concern all who reflect,—and this is part of our especial province.

Again: our business is with every man's *HOME*; (“there is a magic in that little word,”) every man's home, which, as shrewd Sir Henry Wotton says, on our title-page, being “the comfortablest part of his own life, the noblest of his sonne's inheritance, a kinde of private princedome, nay, to the possessors thereof, an epitome of the whole world, may well deserve, by these attributes, according to the degree of the master, to be decently and delightfully adorned.” To make it healthful and joyful; to insure, economically, impunity from fire; such a supply of fresh air, light, (God's first great gift), and warmth, when needed, as the constitution of man demands, and to lead Art—capable of producing “An endless fountain of immortal drink”—delightfully to adorn it, is matter of world-wide interest.

When it is remembered that *Homes* *are* *the* *manufactories* of men, and influence a growing nation, the importance of improving these homes is at once seen. Perfect men come not forth from ill-arranged, ill-ordered dwellings; and how few homes are there which might not be improved! “What idea predominates in our houses?” said Mr. Emerson, in a recent lecture. “Thrift first, and then convenience and pleasure. Take off all the roofs from street to street, and we shall seldom find the temple of any higher god than prudence. The houses of the rich are confectioners' shops, where we get sweatmeats and champagne; the houses of the poor are imitations of these, to the extent of their ability. But this house-keeping cheers neither husband, wife, nor child, and tends greatly to oppress women; for a house kept to the end of prudence, is laborious without joy; kept to the end of display, is impossible to all but a few women, and their success is very dearly bought. The difficulties to be overcome are many and great: nor are they to be overcome by amendment of particulars, one at a time; but only by the aid of ideas for the arrangement of the household to a newer and higher end than that to which our dwellings are usually built and furnished. Is there, truly considered, any calamity more grievous, that more deserves the best good-will to remove it than this,—to go from chamber to chamber, and see *no beauty*; to find in house-mates no aim; to hear an endless chatter and blast; to be compelled to criticise; to hear, only to dissent and be disgusted; to find no invitation to what is good in us, and no receptacle for what is wise. This is a great

price to pay for sweet bread and warm lodging.”

The effect produced on the character by that which is around it is undeniable: by improving the dwellings we should improve the people. In nature, we may sing,—

“The Beautiful! the Beautiful!
Where do we find it not?
It is an all-pervading grace,
And lighteth every spot.

On mountain top and valley deep,
Behold its presence there;
The Beautiful! the Beautiful!
It liveth every where.”

But in our homes there has been little thought of it,—little thought even of fitness, healthfulness, convenience. We would have art enter into the every-day life of the people, and minister constantly to their happiness; not to be regarded as a luxury for the few, but a means of enjoyment open to all. To extend a knowledge and love of art will continue to be our aim, as will be, to give all the aid in our power to those associations which have this end in view.

In the success of the School of Design we have the greatest interest, and it will be our duty to watch its new management even more jealously than we did its old, and, if need be, to aid as strenuously in obtaining a change.

We have again and again said what a powerful contemporary thus urged a few days since,—“The success of the School of Design is an event of higher national importance than many others which are just now making a greater noise in the world. There is no reason why England should be behind other countries in art, even in its highest branches; there is every reason why she should be superior to them in art as applied to manufactures. There never was a more unjust, as well as a more unpatriotic cry, than that raised by Englishmen when they deny their native land a full appreciation of the beautiful in art as well as in nature. Witness in architecture the cathedrals and churches with which every county in England is studded,—Salisbury, York, Canterbury, Ely, Wells, Westminster. Turn to King's College Chapel, and the collegiate buildings of either university; or the ivy-tufted ruins of Tintern or Netley. If we cannot point to a town such as Vicenza, one miracle of Palladio's graceful skill, at least we have our English manor-houses, our village churches, and castles. In music, in painting, and in sculpture, we might enumerate many names which would be honoured everywhere but at home. Take all these facts into account, and, above all, the imaginative literature of England, from Chaucer's first tale to Words-